

## Unburdening Ourselves of Our Judgments

1. Warm-up question: We all have certain pet peeves – little judgments we form about people who do things that annoy us. What's one of your pet peeves?
2. Jeff began Sunday's sermon with several stark statements that he claimed were drawn from the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Before discussing those statements, read Matthew 7:1-5.

*Based on what we just read, Jeff said . . .*

*According to Jesus, the standard by which you will be judged has not yet been set.*

*According to Jesus, the standard by which God judges you may not be the standard by which God judges me.*

*According to Jesus, the standard by which God judges us is malleable – customized to each one of us.*

*In fact, according to Jesus, you get to choose the standard by which you will be judged.*

- a. Which statement most surprises or fascinates you – and why?
  - b. Is each of these statements a fair interpretation of what Jesus says in Matthew 7:1-5? If not, why not?
3. Picture a continuum of judgment that ranges all the way from Really Harsh to Amazingly Merciful. Over the course of time, with each act of judgment we move the needle up or down the continuum until we develop an average score that represents our own unique Judgment Number.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Really Harsh					Amazingly Merciful				

- a. Looking back over the past year or so of your life, what's your Judgment Number? Explain your answer and how you feel about your number.
- b. Who is someone in your life that you struggle not to judge harshly? Why do you think you find it so hard not to judge them harshly?
- c. Tell us about a time when you've seen someone judge another person harshly. How did that affect the one who was judged and the one who did the judging?

- d. Tell us about a time when you've seen someone judge another person with great mercy. How did that affect the one who was judged and the one who did the judging?
  - e. In our Gospel passage, Jesus uses the words "judge" and "judgment" without ever specifying whether we will be judged by God, others, or ourselves. That's probably because the same principle applies regardless who is doing the judging. "The measure we give is the measure we will get back" from God, others, and even ourselves. Jeff suggested that people who judge others harshly also tend to judge themselves harshly, and people who judge others compassionately tend to judge themselves compassionately. Do you think that's true? Why or why not?
  - f. Imagine two people, Mary and Veronica, who each live the same basic life. Suppose each drinks in excess, gets divorced numerous times, and hoards money. The only difference between them is that Mary is a harsh judge of the people around her, while Veronica shows amazing mercy. Then both Mary and Veronica die and stand before God for judgment. As you see it, what difference, if any, will they experience when they stand before God for judgment?
4. Jeff shared three key realizations that, once grasped, might help us become more compassionate judges of others. He said, *I become a more compassionate judge of others when I realize . . .*
- 1) *The magnitude of my own flaws. Matthew 7:3.*
  - 2) *That every good thing I have in me has been given to me as a gift, rather than being earned. I Corinthians 4:7.*
  - 3) *How much I don't know about others and their situation.*
- a. What is a "log" in your eye, i.e., a great flaw of yours, that you are comfortable acknowledging in this Oasis Group? How do you hope others in your life will judge you for that flaw?
  - b. I Corinthians 4:7 reads as follows: "Who says that you are any better than other people? What do you have that wasn't given to you? And if you were given what you have, why are you bragging as if it weren't a gift?" What point is this verse trying to make? Can you think of any good thing in you, or about you, that was not "given" to you by forces beyond your control, i.e., either life experience or your DNA (nurture or nature)?
  - c. Have you ever judged someone harshly only later to discover additional information that radically altered your judgment? What happened?
  - d. Jeff said, "When I start to get in touch with the magnitude of my own flaws, how much I don't know about others and their situation, and that every good thing in me is a gift I haven't earned, it takes all the energy out of my righteous indignation and makes it much easier to show mercy." Which of the three realizations most resonates with you – and why?